

British Colonies vol 8,

A
S P E E C H

INTENDED TO HAVE BEEN SPOKEN

AT THE

GENERAL COURT

OF THE

East-India Company,

On FRIDAY the 28th of MAY, 1779.

ON

OPENING THE TRADE.

L O N D O N,

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MDCCLXXIX.



ADVERTISEMENT.

THOUGHTS hastily thrown together on extensive questions call for the largest allowance—for the greatest indulgence; and it is not so much what is said that is to be considered, as the justice, the expediency, the usefulness of the measures themselves that are proposed or defended. To say that this hasty performance is laid before the public “with a melancholy assurance that not a word of it will be regarded,” would be to labour without hope. I believe the *subject-matter* of it will be considered—will be regarded, was this paper never to come into any other hands than the printer’s and bookseller’s. I believe there are those in England, who have both sense and resolution to shew it, that see our India Company is now as arrant a job as at this day the Farmers General of France are, and that the plain meaning of both is to draw large revenues into the pockets of particular men, and combinations of interest, having all the effects of a general tax, but

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without a name. I believe there are thousands that see both the King and his subjects in danger of nothing so much as a well-managed spirit of money-getting among a few leading families in the kingdom, who only use Ministers and Directors as the instruments by which they express their principle of governing both King and people, i. e. to get all they can at the expence of the whole ; and that when the representatives of the people will begin to judge for themselves whether they will grant supplies or not, then the King, his family, his crown, subjects, and dominions, must all be put to the hazard, to force them to submit to their money-getting maxims of government. The King himself is no longer allowed, by this combined interest, to be free, than while he will fall in with their wishes. Visible Ministers may have thousands and ribbons, old Ministers pensions, Directors power and profit, Contractors jobs, Nabobs all India at their feet, while they draw in the common yoke. The King and the people have but one interest, one safety. Two things are only wanted, besides the blessings of Providence, to secure and preserve them against all dangers within

within and without—a free commerce to all the subjects in Europe and America to all the world, and freedom of communication between King and people. The people cannot support their King without *this* freedom of commerce; and, if the crown of England at any time will aid a combination of interests to demand supplies, whether the people will or will not grant them, are able or not able to raise them, then two things only remain—resistance, under all the wickedness and horror of rebellion—compliance, on the conditions of sinking into poverty and misery, and holding all they can get at the pleasure of that avarice which surrounds the throne, and every chair on which the King can sit—an avarice which has swept into its interest a sure standing majority, not only of the representatives of the people, but of the elective places themselves, and now reigns lord and master of all the people can raise, and the King bestow. And to this avarice, at this day, both King and people are every thing of slaves but that of knowing they are so. The Eastern address of bowing fifty rank deep be-

fore the prince is so well refined upon, that, with all the snuggles of English manners, the King is on the point of being detached as completely from the general interest and general support, as the princes of those countries the English servants of the East-India Company have made so often to change their masters within the last twenty years. It is the cry of courtiers now.—Beware of the power of the Crown, while grants of charters, contracts, and taxes, are beggaring India and England together. The dearest interests of both the Crown and Subjects are to be hazarded, that the tenants in possession may continue in the receipt of the rents and profits of the state. Shut up America, company India, restrain Ireland, and leave but this Island alone to feed the secret interest, and this is to be preferred in their view to that of keeping all the empire united for the general good.

To oppose those avaricious destroyers of the safety and happiness of both the King and his people is impossible; they are every where by their influence to hurt and to gain, but, when look-
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ed for to be opposed, they sink into quiet, easy, well-bred noblemen and gentlemen, that not a man in the kingdom but themselves can prove they have individually any thing to do with either King, Ministers, Directors, Nabobs, or Contractors. But, tho' the *men* are not to be opposed, their principle of action may. That principle is to surround the King, and shut up the subjects from freedom of commerce, and for themselves to keep the keys; sell every place to which the King can appoint, and prefer a greater sum flowing thro' contracted channels to the less sum they know they would receive, was the King left to his own royal choice to appoint those he thought fittest for his and the public service; and collected no more from his people than that service liberally required. This, which would be the ruin of the secret-interest, is the way of safety and support to both King and People; and this design of opening the trade to India is only to bring the minds of all who wish well to both to a point. And if the leading people in London, Bristol, Liverpool, and the great trading-towns and sea-ports in the kingdom, will press the matter home, then, perhaps, they

they will find that Ministers have other masters than the King, and Patriots other masters than the People: and their interests will lead them to unite, and oppose the King's being, as the Constitution intends, the immediate executive authority over all that are subject to us, as well as they will oppose general commerce for the general interest of the people.

The men to counteract these selfish systems, to set the King free and keep themselves so, are the men that form the middle rank of the state. The leading men in the great towns must forget their local interests, and look for their particular advantage where only it is truly to be found and preserved—that is, in the general welfare. What would it profit the city of London to be first city of a country cut off from commerce, burthened and oppressed within itself by the loads laid upon it? What would it avail any of the towns in England, was Ireland secured by a chain about it from all trade, if they themselves were reduced to misery? No interests so secure to every part of the dominions as that which arises from the interest of the whole. To
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this universal as well as particular interest both of King and people, all exclusive rights and restraining laws are opposed. It remains to be seen whether our men of real sense will lay it out upon trifles, or they will act as becomes them for the general good both of the King and all his dominions, by uniting together in the design to obtain *a free, universal commerce, to the subjects of the whole empire, both with each other and with all the world.*

A government substantially of a combination of great men is our greatest danger, as the continuance and increase of it would be our greatest misery. The simple principle of the English constitution is the only rule to be recurred to to counteract the aristocratical design that is reducing the great body of the subjects to poverty, and raising others to the rank and revenues of princes. The common-law constitution vests the King personally with the sole executive power over all the dominions.—The constitution means to open and keep open every field of commerce as common right to all the commons of the land, that property may spread itself among them; that they may, as they are intended, preserve their weight

weight in the legislature for the general safety. Such restraining laws as exclude all but a company to trade to India, or any other part of the world, are but so many ways of enriching a small number at the expence of the many. In almost every other country but our own these designs have succeeded to a degree that leaves all the property of the people at the command of their rulers, and makes them absolute. To oppose the same designs in England, opening the trade to India to all the subjects seems to be of no small importance; and, whatever factories or settlements we retain in India, to have them under the regular established administration of our laws, by the executive power entrusted by the Constitution, seems to be a measure of equal importance to the people of that country. To advance these ends the following Speech was intended: and it is published with an hearty wish that the measure may take place, on just conditions, between the nation at large and the proprietors and creditors of the India Company; a body, however respectable in itself, forming but a very small and private interest, compared with that of the whole empire.

A SPEECH,

S P E E C H, &c.

MR. CHAIRMAN,

THIS General Court being called in consequence of a bill being brought into Parliament for continuing the territorial acquisitions in India in the possession of the Company, I would humbly request your indulgence, Sir, and that of the Court, to lay before you a few considerations. Was I not satisfied that I am speaking to gentlemen who will hear me with candour, and

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with indulgence, I should find myself under the greatest difficulty in drawing upon me your attention: but, convinced as I am of the importance of the object I feel myself so forcibly impressed with, was I less persuaded of the liberality of the minds I am addressing, and had I ever so much reputation to loose, I should be contented to hazard it with you in a cause that appears to me so interesting to this kingdom, and the extensive dominions that have become subject to it in India.

Sir, without any consideration as a proprietor, without any connection or support either within or without the Courts of the East-India Company, and without so much as knowing that I am to be followed by a single second, I venture to propose to the consideration of this General Court, and I hope I may truly declare I do it with the greatest respect to the characters before whom

whom I speak, that, from all the evidence I have been able to take into my view of the Company, the country in India under its government, and the present situation of Great - Britain, a surrender of the Company's Charter to the Crown is now become a debt due to his Majesty, as the head and guardian under God of the whole empire : a debt which a Prince, who, in near a twenty-years reign, has never discovered a wish to possess himself of whatever another could call his own, may not demand, and which therefore requires the more care, lest the moderation of the Prince should bring the charge of injustice or ingratitude against the subjects for with-holding.

The reasons which appear to me, Sir, to claim this surrender of the Company's charter to the King, are those which, I am persuaded, would only induce his Majesty to receive the charter from your hands,

were you authoris'd by the whole propriety to-morrow to lay it at his feet—I mean the general good — first of his subjects within the realm, and then of the much more numerous people that are now the subjects of your servants in India.

When I thus freely declare, before a General Court of the East-India Company, what, from all my thoughts upon the subject, obliges me to think it my duty to declare, that the very name and being of the Company itself ought to give place to considerations which reduce, in the comparison, even this princely company but to one single bottom that swims the ocean, permit me to say, Sir, in the moment I am declaring this destruction, as I may call it, of the Company that has placed you at its head, I feel myself speaking in the presence of subjects accustomed themselves to govern, and who, in revolving in their minds
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the duties of their station, have known themselves obliged, by the highest of all considerations, to prefer the good of many to that of a few,---the prosperity of a whole community to that of a part. And thus considering you, Sir, and all in whose presence I speak, I venture to intreat you to apply your own rules of thinking to the present state of the nation, of which your Company is but a part, that you may find, in the situation of his Majesty, and of all his subjects at this day, the reasons for voluntarily surrendering your charter.

The conquest which it has pleased the Almighty to permit this nation to make of the provinces in India, was but barely completed when the war began in the Colonies of this country, who, in defiance of their duty to God, as subjects of the government his Providence had placed them under, have erected an independent

pendent government---have made alliances, and at this day are united with the forces of France to support themselves against us, and open the communication between America and Europe, and no longer to pay to this country the allegiance of subjects.

Unknown as the designs of Providence are to minds of the first intelligence, mine presumes not to hint at what shall be the end of our contest; whether they shall return to colonies, or finally be permitted to raise themselves to what their leaders wish. But thus much may be said,---That two great continents, Europe and America, have been long separated by this island. The navigation-laws of Great-Britain have been the keys to lock up American commerce from all the world but ourselves. Our title to it was the same as any private man's right to what was raised at the expence he bestowed upon it. What further support,
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secret or avowed, will be given by any other states in Europe, depends on the regard to justice, or a want of justice, in the minds of those that conduct the government of each of those states. If they think their interest lies on the side of a free trade with America, in spite of Great-Britain, in spite of justice, they may unite in the alliance against us. They that think it is proved by history, and the experience mankind have had of one another, that men will prefer self-interest to justice, if their names do but sink undistinguished in the gross of the community with whom they act, and they are not singled out by name to bear the disgrace they deserve — they that think thus, and that even pride, that other bad passion, and twin-sister of avarice, cannot be brought in to counteract the love of gain in the commercial states of Europe, will expect (unless we consent to punish America for her rebellion, by leaving her to
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a government of her own) that we have yet a siege of Troy before us—a war of many years to come—a sea war, with the loss of the trade, the principal trade, that supplied us with men for our ships.

To take another view of our situation: Suppose the American war at an end on the terms we have offered, both countries to bear their own costs; the people of Great-Britain and Ireland, casting up the account to this day, would have to sit down with a debt of two hundred millions upon their backs, besides the current charges of Government. Judging of what may be expected by what has been, no laws would be able to bind the King's subjects to stay in Great-Britain and Ireland under the continuance of such a weight of expence. They would, as they did from the end of the last war to the beginning of this, emigrate by thousands. This would be the least mischievous

chievous consequence likely to follow the best conclusion we can look for to this war, supposing it at an end.

Reduce the expence of our Government, and of all its establishments, to what it was before there were any English plantations in America, and the subjects of England would be in the same situation, after we have lost all benefit from America, as before we had any from it: but continue the expences of the State at what they have been regularly rising to, under all Administrations, for many years past, and there will remain but a few alternatives before the People of Great-Britain. The yearly supplies demanded from them now, will soon take away what the middle rank of the People have to pay. They will either refuse to part with it, or go away where they think they can have cheaper lands, better trade, or a less expensive Government to support. So long is it before the pro-

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perty collected from the subjects at large returns to them again in any country, that it appears to me, Sir, with some degree of certainty, that the subjects of this Government---I mean the middling class, which support both Government and the Poor---will either refuse to pay what is called for at their hands, or they will not be able to do it, supposing they continue to their present number to remain within the seas that surround the island; and that the great body of the People must sink into the general condition of poverty in which we see them in all other countries where their Governors have not adopted the great policy of a frugal government, and of keeping the Prince's treasures in the pockets of his subjects. Once bring the middle rank in this kingdom, by the force of the revenue-laws, and the fears annexed to non-payment, into the same poor, dispirited condition, as the subjects of France, and France, by having double the number, will just be twice our strength.

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I believe, Sir, if we look at this general poverty among the people of Great-Britain and Ireland as a very distant object, we shall be chargeable with over-looking the plainest use of figures that figures can be applied to. Take the expence of the State at the lowest estimate the best peace would leave it—take the general property of the middling rank, who finally pay all the taxes by their industry, at the very highest, and let our trade to America be as great as ever it has been since the last war, and let but such a transfer as is now made every year from the many that pay what few comparatively finally receive, and it cannot be any industry that can keep pace with the demands of Government : the People will either say they will pay no longer, or they will sink into poverty, tired with labouring for that which is not left them to enjoy ; and they will have, in a very few years, as few motives for supporting their present Government as they would have to

support any other that took from them all that they had.

The common honesty and good faith of the Legislature are pledged to the nation and to the world for the payment of the public debt or its interest ; and a great addition of expence is as unavoidable as our defence against dangers from without, and the administration of Government within, are necessary. And if the present yearly expence of Government on any peace be such as to reduce the great body of the nation to a state of poverty, with all their present resources, two things only remain—Government must either want the supplies it calls for from the subjects at large, or the subjects must have some new and general field of industry laid open to them, to enable them to keep pace with the demands of Government. The midland counties, and the city of London, may be called the heart of the empire : the currency will fail there
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last; the weakest will go first to the wall. I do not know what gentlemen think of Scotland and Ireland; but, from the state these extremities of the body politic are now in, they, I think, will soon become dead members of it, if we keep taking from them what we do, and do not afford them some more general springs of commerce than any they have at present.

That the People of England, Scotland, and Ireland, in general, are any way enabled to pay their part of the taxes now demanded of them, in consequence of the East-India Company's trade, will hardly be advanced. It is but in very few places in the islands of Great-Britain and Ireland where there are the smallest traces of any advantages arising to his Majesty's subjects in general, in consequence of our India trade. The intercourse with India for some years past has raised up many opulent families: they have purchased estates in different parts of the kingdom; they have rivalled

valled the old landed interest; they have occasioned a general advance in rents of land, from the united causes of buying estates and votes; but, as to any general communication of property to the People of England, Scotland, and Ireland, in consequence of the present trade to India, it is not to be found out of sight of the possessions acquired by the chief proprietors and servants of the Company.

But, on the contrary, there are inconveniences in consequence of the Company, as universal as the sea that surrounds the King's dominions;—for every guinea given to the Company for the chief articles of import, there are five sent out of the kingdom to buy the India goods that are smuggled to us at an under price from every country in Europe that sends a ship to India.

From the present state of this country, and the effects of the Company's trade, there appear to me the strongest reasons for
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thinking, that there is not a proprietor of the Company, that can do a greater service to his King and to his Country, than in voting a surrender of the Company's charter; that the trade may become general; that the profit of the commerce may spread itself; and that the great sums may be saved to the nation that are now sent out of it to other countries for every kind of India goods.

It may be said, the subjects in general know nothing of the India trade; they would not know how to conduct it.—The same subjects will be left in the kingdom after the trade is open, that now there are whilst it is confined to the Company. The port of London will not, perhaps, send a ship less; the London merchants will, most likely, send as many ships as now sail out of the Thames; and, when once the duties have been taken off the imports from India, and laid generally on some inland articles, all the distant parts of the kingdom will be supplied, by a regular importation from their own

own trade to India, with all the teas and other India goods that are now smuggled from all the countries in Europe that have any trade to India, and for which the current coin is draining out of the kingdom perpetually. Every creek will not, we may be satisfied, send a ship beyond the Cape of Good Hope, but leave it to Bristol, Liverpool, Glasgow, Leith, Newcastle, and Hull, to try the trade till they are taught it. Men cannot have a stronger obligation for being prudent, than being the first that are to suffer by their own want of caution.

But Government want two millions; the Company can only raise it. The charter must be renewed, or the money not had.—The supplies to Government are only sure and lasting while they arise from a certain ability in the subjects in general. Keep but a field of industry open before them in the great branches of commerce, and Government will never be at a loss for supplies. The subjects in general must raise it as it is,
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and the two millions to be paid by the Company the people must pay, and some hundred thousands more for the trouble of collecting it, which the Company can do only by proclaiming the quantity, and by that the price at which they will sell their tea ; an article which now gives any Company that has the exclusive trade in it the same power over the property of the subjects who so generally use it, as if none but a Company could sell corn or coals, or any other article that was universally used amongst us. None being permitted to sell but them, so far as they can exclude smuggling, such a company can have no other rule than its own moderation in what it will take from the subjects in general.

Such exclusive rights as these, by charters from Government, whether they are to India or Hudson's-Bay, whatever is paid for them is a tax laid upon the subjects

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without a name. It is doing the same thing as the Ministry of France do in the name of the Farmers-General; they give them an exclusive right, under severe penalties, to sell a quantity of tobacco costing three-pence for three shillings. It is no more a necessary than tea; but custom has given it all the force of a necessary: and fix an exclusive right to sell such an article, and it does the same thing as if the right was given to be sole dealers in bread. The want of a free commerce has been the self-interested motive from which the Opposition has arisen to a rejection of our government in America. By liberal things shall the liberal man stand. Subjects, whose strength is obtained from commerce, could they be as free as the air that fills their sails, the better would it be for their Government—more certain would it be of support. Cramp, confine, and company the trading people of any country, and they will either leave it, grow poor in it, or

or break the bars of that policy which at once lays heavy burthens on the people's backs, and then ties their hands behind them. And this a law does, that says to all the ports of England, Scotland, Ireland, and America, but one, you shall not trade to India. Were all the subjects in every town and port in all his Majesty's dominions declared free to trade to all the world, wherever they could sell for most, and buy for least, it would unite them more to the common Government, and enable them to support it to a degree they could never do under laws that restrained their commerce.

The more free men are to follow any course of industry that presents itself to their view, the more successful they are found to be in every country. And who can prove it dangerous to the interests of any Government, to give the widest field of industry

to all its subjects? The sum the Company may now grant to Government will only be like a morsel to an hungry man; not a single season will pass over our heads before all benefit arising from it will be lost and forgotten for ever: but the charter to be granted for this sum will stand as an hedge about the best field left to the subjects to cultivate for their own support, and to enable them to bear up under the weight the national expence now lays upon them.—But an argument for the surrender of the charter remains, of great force I confess with me; and this is, the situation of the numerous people who are living under the Company's government in India.

To say that there are not at this day, among the first servants of the Company in India, characters of great justice and disinterestedness, would be a denial of the truth, or a want of acquaintance with it; but it
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would imply a greater want of acquaintance with men in general, were we to make ourselves sure, that the people, who have become subject to the Company in India, should always have such characters to govern them as are there at present. The whole form and spirit of our government over those numerous people in India, is as absolute as absolute can be; and so well is it understood so to be both on the people's part and ours, that the very boys, who have nothing more of dignity or authority than the Company's cockade, will knock any ordinary native to the ground for no other crime than passing him without cringing to him as a slave to a tyrant. None of the people of that country, be their rank or property what it will, have either voice or part in their government. What signifies an act of parliament, saying, those people may appeal for justice to any of our countrymen? Did they all know the laws made at Westminster, it would signify no more

more to them than the same laws would signify to the people in this country, if they were all made without any voice of theirs, and administered by absolute power. An appeal to judges in such a situation, word any written law as you will, is nothing but the appeal of a slave to his master. Never were those brave men bred in our mountains of Scotland greater slaves to their chiefs, before their noble countryman, Argyle, obtained the law for their relief, than millions of people are at this day in India to the servants of this Company; and with this great difference, that the vassals of an Highland chief had his honour and his interest on the side of their safety and protection. The honour sought by most of the subjects of this country sent to India, is to return with a fortune to England. The honour and interest in this case are all against the subjects of the Company. The more we can take from the people of India, the more are all the purposes advanced

wanted for which the generality of your servants go to India ; and, when they return to their native country, whether the people they left behind them prosper or suffer, it is nothing to them. This was never the case with the vassals of an Highland chief ; he and his family derived their support, their strength, their dignity, from the number and prosperity of their people ; on the contrary, our officers in India are tenants for life ; their heirs have no future interest ; they have no ties to the country, or the people of it, that would prevent their cutting up the last tree, were the inhabitants scorched to death for want of its shade. Sir, I do not wish to repeat grievances ; but the cause of justice,—of humanity, calls for the evidence of what has passed already under the Company's government, and, if we form our estimate of what is to be expected under its government by what we have already seen, what is it, Sir, we are to look for? I have no
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desire to reflect on any character, dead or living. May they all be found among those that have obtained forgiveness from God! What have you not seen already, Sir?—"In the space of five or six years we destroyed, starved, and drove away, more inhabitants from Bengal, than are to be found in all our American colonies. This is no exaggeration, but plain matter of fact, collected from the accounts sent over by Mr. Hastings*."

This mischief was produced only by a combination of interests among the servants of the Company, who, without any reflection on any part of them, have, in general, but one motive for going to India---the obtaining of a fortune. If the Company continue master of these people, the world, it is to be hoped, will never see their servants, civil and military, entering into part-

* See the Speech of a Right Rev. Member of the House of Peers, published in 1774, by Mr. Cadell.

nership again to take the management of the common necessities of life under their care, that the inhabitants may be constrained to give them all they have to give, or die. But the object that takes the present servants of the Company to India is the same now it was then.—Gain is their object; whatever they bring away the inhabitants lose, and by what means their property is taken from them matters not. The effects of our government in India shew us the spirit of it; such is the scarcity and dearth of provisions, that the lower servants of the Company, who are masters of the people, can themselves at this time hardly live in India—in that country which but twenty years ago, before our wars and conquests began, was a garden of plenty, as the letters of your late honourable and much-to-be-regretted servant* have published to all the world. Sir, a Company government,—a merchant

* Mr. Scrafton.

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government, is a government for gain : go who will to India, under the present establishment, the people will be bleeding to death. A commander in chief may open a vein, a petty officer may only fasten upon them as a leech or a fly, but the people are bleeding still; and they have already suffered so much at our hands, that what they have left in their own is not worth defending, were they not too much dispirited and heart-broken to attempt it. They are helpless men at our mercy ; not one in a million of them has been found courageous enough, in cases of cruel personal oppression, even to sue for justice. But two, I think, have yet found their way to England to tell us the conduct of our countrymen to them : and half the evidence that has come to light of our general conduct is sufficient to shew us, if the name of the English East-India Company was for ever abolished, it would not sufficiently express what is due to the crimes that have been committed

committed under its authority ; and the very permission given to the continuance of the Company may be in danger of being considered, by the distant part of the empire, as a mark of our indifference to the happiness of all who are under our government, and out of our sight.

Was the Government of the conquered provinces in the hands of the Crown, it is true we have none but subjects to send to govern them. But every Prince has a natural self-interest in the good government of his people ; his own support depends upon their attachment, and men cannot give their attachment to those that injure or oppress them. On the right choice of Governors of distant provinces depends the favour of the Prince in the minds of the people ; and it certainly is a great question with the Legislature of this kingdom, whether they ought to devolve upon a company of subjects the exe-

cutive power over so many millions of
 people as Providence has permitted to
 be brought under our government in In-
 dia. There is good evidence to believe
 that these people were greatly induced to
 favour us from what they understood of
 the English Government; that it was not
 a government of self-interest, like that of
 their own Princes, whose spies were perpe-
 tually employed to point out the subjects
 that had property, that they might be
 plundered of it. Whatever may have been
 the complaints raised against our govern-
 ment in America, there have been no in-
 stances in any officer or servant under the
 appointment of the Crown of such conduct,
 or the shadow of such conduct, as there
 is but too much proof to believe has been
 practised by the servants of the Company
 over the people of India. Was avarice it-
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pressing the people in order to obtain their property, than the Company's servants have done in India. Never did the subjects of those provinces suffer so much under the most tyrannical, avaricious Nabob that ever governed them, as they have done since the Mogul granted Bengal, Bahar, and Orissa, to the English East India Company.

Any government under any company of men united together only from motives of gain—any government through the medium of such a body, must be a government of mere self-interest. Gain is the idol universally set up by the masters and servants of such communities, and in India we have seen every principle of justice and humanity sacrificed to it. And when those that have gained most at the expence of the people of these provinces return to England, they are lost in the gross of the community that sent them. Any appeal from the natives to our national justice, would,
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if permitted, endanger the combined interests of the Company and their servants: whoever suffers by their oppression in India must be silenced; and so effectually have they been silenced, that of all the thousands that have suffered at our hands, not more than two have ever been able to bring their complaints home to England.

Let me remind you, Sir, that I still think myself speaking to men who do not confine all their deliberations to the single point of profit, but to men who will give the full weight to every fair consideration on the part of the numerous people who are now subject to us in India. Let us forget for a moment our condition as proprietors of a trading company's stock, and place ourselves in the situation the inhabitants of Wales, Scotland, or Ireland would be in, was Parliament to pass an act to give such a Company as this, the same power over them, as this Company now has over double

ble the number of people in India to all that are in Great Britain and Ireland together. I know, Sir, how easy it is to dismiss this consideration from our minds and hurry home to dinner : but let us not forget we are men, and that all the inhabitants of Bengal are men also, and have a right given them by our common Creator to have their case considered, as we in their situation would wish to have our own. Gentlemen may smile, with full pockets from India, at treating so seriously the equality of a people, who have been considered in so different a light by some of them, as to contend for their being governed as the slaves of the servants of our India Company, because they have been governed as the slaves of their Princes time out of mind. We are not those Princes, nor answerable for their conduct; and, were we inclined to forget that we are answerable for our own, the present history of our affairs, one would think, is enough to keep us in mind of it.

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The crimes of nations, as well as of individuals, are sometimes, nay often, denoted by their punishments. Soon after the servants of this Company had been making a revolution in India, contrary to solemn oaths, and at a vast expence to the people of that country, this country adopted a policy towards her own Colonies, which has already obliged us to pay back no small part of what this State more than permitted its subjects to bring away from India, acquired by a title no better than that which our own subjects now set up for taking the dominions of our Government under their own. The property of our East-India Company was also the very instrument used to kindle the flame of this dangerous war in America, which already threatens us with having three millions of subjects taken away from us in our own dominions in America, for that number destroyed, starved to death, and driven away, by the servants of this Company, from the dominions

dominions they have the government of in India: and the very same means by which we acquired three rich provinces in the East-Indies have been made use of, and are now using, to take from us thirteen provinces of equal value in America. To me, Sir, there appears no medium between letting the people we have subdued in India return to their own masters, and taking them under the immediate government of the State, and no longer continue so much power over them in the hands of the servants of a Company of subjects, whatever purposes of self-interest may be answered by it.

If we go on without marking any page in the History of the World with any expression of our national abhorrence of so much wrong as has been done in India in the name and under the authority of this Company, it is impossible that either the present or any of the future ages of the

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world should believe any thing to the contrary of our being on the side of the wrongdoers—the authors of all the fraud and violence that have been shewn to the defenceless people whose property we have taken, and to the princes whose dominions we have usurped, and in which we have committed enormities that disgrace not only our national justice, but would have disgraced human nature to have committed in its worst and most savage state in any age—in any country. Was the Judge of all the earth—the avenger of the oppressed, to permit, by any divisions among ourselves, or any combination of foreign powers, our princes to be cut off, turned out of their palaces, or kept as state prisoners in them, and the people of this country to be plundered and starved, till three millions of them were destroyed or driven away, and the rest left in helpless misery; could either prince or people say this was not the measure we had given to the princes and people of India, under the name and authority of
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of this Company?—I hope I have offended no individual. I did not mean to do it; and if I have advanced a charge against the Company not warranted by the fact, I will recal it with any confession. I have examined for myself the evidence for what I have said; I believe what I say; and such is my opinion of the past conduct of this Company, that to ask of Government either name or being for it, is to me the same thing as asking fresh powers to the robber and murderer: and for Government to grant any new power over the people in India to the Company, after all the use that has been made of the old, to the knowledge of all Europe and all India, would be the same thing as sealing an approval of all their past enormities by the King, Lords, and Commons, of Great-Britain. I hope, Sir, what I feel in speaking on this subject does not utterly mislead my judgment, when I say, I think it impossible for just and thinking minds, in our own and every country

on earth, to draw any other conclusion from the public act of renewal of the Company's Charter, than that this nation holds for just and right all that has been done in the name of this Company in India. An authority to depose Princes, to deprive them of their dominions, and to force away from their subjects all that could be brought away from them, would not render a nation an object of greater dread and abhorrence than such an authority would carry with it to all the world. Justice to the people and to the country we have so much injured, demands of us the abolishing the very name of a community that must, as long as it exists, be our reproach as a nation in the sight of all Europe, our own colonies, and in the sight of all the world that pay any regard to what is passing in it. Continue but the Company on any terms, and there is no expression of our disapprobation of what has been done in its name, that can discover to the world, or the ages
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to come, that the King, Parliament, and people of Great-Britain, do not consider themselves as indifferent to all the violence that has been done to every principle of justice and humanity under the government of the Company in India.—As to any right we have to govern the provinces of the King of India, in any name, in any form, it is just the same right as the subjects in America have to govern the provinces of the King of England; and our right to the revenues of the rich countries of Bengal, Bahar, and Orissa, is no other than that the subjects of the Mogul, or any of his Nabobs, have to come and possess the dominions of England and Wales. To take them at all is a national wrong; to hold them on any terms is an avowal of that wrong. To give up the right to the owner, is the best national policy that can be adopted, till the future experience of mankind shall prove honesty *not* to be the best

best policy. But, if so much moderation and justice, as letting go what we have no right to hold, would be a reversal of our principles and of our conduct that would make us ashamed of our honesty, let us at least govern the people we have subdued in a way more likely for their benefit and our national credit, than farming them out by a new charter to the servants of the same Company that have so much injured the people of India, and so much disgraced us as a nation. What is passed cannot be recalled; neither can men command consequences to follow their measures. The direct contrary of what they design may follow. The single object of human consideration is in the present moment of every business to aim at the best end by best means; and so far as any man or any community has done unjustly, all the reparation that can be made is to design and do the best for the future: and, as every man must at the last

last stand or fall by the part he takes, I shall be excused for the time I have taken in a place where only I had the right of proposing, as I now do, the surrender of your charter for the purpose of opening the commerce to all his Majesty's subjects, to enable them to support his government, and to procure the much more numerous people of India the best Government they can ever have while they are subject to us—that of being taken under the regular administration of the executive power of the State, whose long established laws are so well known, and so well adapted to prevent or punish any abuse of power in the immediate servants of the Crown.

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